



February 2, 2011

Honorable Frank Foster  
S-1486 House Office Building  
P.O. Box 30014  
Lansing, MI 48909

Dear Representative Foster,

I would like to thank you and the members of the House Natural Resources, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee for addressing House Bill 4160 introduced by Representative Wayne Schmidt.

Since the state's benefits from the *Pure Michigan* campaign with regards to attracting new visitors and the return on investment are widely publicized, and likely to be addressed by others, I would like to focus my remarks on the impact of this campaign where it counts for us – that is in our businesses and in our community.

Building new economic opportunities through tourism must first start with creating new demand for our product. We know that Michigan has great product but that feeling is not necessarily shared with the millions of consumers outside of Michigan's borders. Many consumers' feelings towards Michigan are formed by outdated and misrepresented perceptions about our state. This impacts our tourism industry as well as other investment opportunities that Michigan could benefit from.

The Pure Michigan campaign is changing the conversation about Michigan. It is creating a new excitement about Michigan and is causing consumers to investigate Michigan in ways that we have never seen before.

In the past two years our website at [TraverseCity.com](http://TraverseCity.com) has seen a significant increase in visitor traffic coming from out-of-state markets. This interest has been stimulated by the intrigue that has been created by the award winning Pure Michigan campaign. The referral traffic from [Michigan.org](http://Michigan.org) to [TraverseCity.com](http://TraverseCity.com) over the past two years has grown over 145 percent, and if you isolate the timeframe during the months that the campaign is airing, the increase in referral traffic jumps to a remarkable 258 percent.

When we analyze our web activity even further, we see significant increase in interest from many states near and far including: 31% increase from Illinois, 42% increase from Ohio and 39% increase in Indiana. And from states further away such as: New York at an 85% increase, Pennsylvania at a 39% increase, Connecticut at an increase of 60% or Massachusetts at 57% and many others also showing significant increases.

This increase in activity doesn't just stop with web statistics. We are experiencing increases in actual visitors from outside of Michigan coming to our community, staying in our hotels, eating in our restaurants, purchasing souvenirs in our retail shops, golfing at our golf courses, buying wine at our wineries and purchasing fuel at our gas stations. They are earning money in other states and leaving it in our community and hopefully going home with nothing but fond memories, smiles and stories to spread our good word.

Representative Foster  
February 2, 2011  
Page two



I consistently hear remarks from our community's merchants that they are seeing more visitors from out-of-state. They tell me that the *Pure Michigan* campaign is working. And it's not just benefiting the big businesses. Our smallest members are experiencing the impact. Melanie Olsen the owner of the Lake n' Pines Lodge, a four bedroom B&B located near Interlochen has seen her out-of-state business grow to represent over 40% of her business in 2010. While the numbers may vary from hotel to hotel the story is the same – the *Pure Michigan* campaign is bringing more visitors to our community.

The *Pure Michigan* campaign also provides our organization, the Traverse City Convention & Visitors Bureau, with a strategic marketing platform for us to leverage our own marketing funds. Where the *Pure Michigan* campaign creates an interest in the state we invest our own resources in key markets to help consumers "connect the dots" from Michigan to Traverse City as a great destination choice within Michigan for their vacation plans.

We've also partnered with Travel Michigan to contribute our own financial resources to participate with their Pure Michigan Partnership Programs. We are planning to partner with Travel Michigan again in 2011. We are preparing to invest over \$600,000 in private funding from our organization to participate in existing and new partnership programs. We truly believe in the power and benefits of this campaign!

At a time when Michigan needs to invest in its assets, the *Pure Michigan* campaign is a solid and proven investment strategy that is working for Michigan, its communities and most of all for the thousands of Michigan families that depend on a stronger Michigan economy to provide jobs and hope.

Thank you for your time and I hope that you will support House Bill 4160 as a catalyst for economic improvement for Michigan.

Sincerely,

Brad Van Dommelen  
President & CEO  
Traverse City Convention & Visitors Bureau

Cc: House Natural Resources, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation Committee Members